

More reasons to linger

URA releases new design guidelines for public spaces.



Need another reason to linger longer at shopping malls and office buildings? Some of these buildings may offer more delightful and inviting public spaces in future with URA's new design guidelines for privately-owned public space released on 24 January 2017.

Along with parks and other open spaces in neighbourhoods, public spaces in private developments are increasingly important as Singapore's urban landscape grows denser – allowing us to take shelter from the rain, enjoy a quiet moment in our busy schedules, catch up with friends, or just savour the beautiful environment around us. These spaces also promote street life and vibrancy, serving as “living rooms” of our city.

The new guidelines aim to raise the bar on the design of quality and meaningful public spaces. Under this, owners and developers of buildings in selected new and redevelopment sites in areas that meet certain criteria like being located close to major transport nodes and pedestrian paths will need to provide public spaces with effect from 24 April 2017. Others not in the selected sites may also voluntarily provide public spaces if their developments meet the criteria. Developers providing such public spaces can qualify for a gross floor area exemption that may result in significant savings.

We catch up with Cheng Hsing Yao, Group Managing Director of GuocoLand Singapore and

Low Chee Wah, Head of Retail and Commercial Division of Fraser Centrepoint Singapore to check out two new public spaces coming up in the city – Tanjong Pagar Centre's Urban Park and Frasers Tower's The Park and The Oasis.

What kinds of activities can we look forward to in the new public spaces?

Hsing Yao: On a regular day, workers, guests and visitors of Tanjong Pagar Centre can unwind in the urban park, surrounded by cafes and outlets with alfresco dining, while residents from nearby neighbourhoods can relax in the new space with their kids and pets. People can expect a year-long calendar of events starting with one of our tenants, Virgin Active Gym's regular public mass exercises in the city room. Another one of our tenants, Japan Rail Café, will be collaborating with the Japan Tourism Board to hold Japanese cultural events here. We are now in talks with community bodies and event organisers to bring performances, artisan or farmers' markets to the urban park. Our aim is for the city room and urban park to become a community hub for the Tanjong Pagar district with a year-long calendar of events.

Chee Wah: Visitors can enjoy access to public amenities with lush landscaping, public art displays, ample seating and well-designed shelters at The Park located on the ground floor. The Oasis,

the three-storey retail podium linked to Frasers Tower, will add a wide range of food and beverage offerings to the already vibrant Telok Ayer and Cecil Street precinct. It also houses a sky garden where tenants and their guests can recharge amidst their busy day, surrounded by flora and water features. The office building also caters to cyclists who ride to work. A secured bicycle parking facility with over 80 lots and other facilities such as lockers and shower rooms will enable cyclists to enjoy a fuss-free transition from their workout to the start of their work day.

Why did you decide to create the 150,000 square feet urban park?

Hsing Yao: The area directly above the MRT was preloaded to take a new six-storey building when the MRT station was built in the 1980s. However, after we studied the site and the district, we decided not to build over the MRT station. This is because Tanjong Pagar district is rapidly developing and will become more densely built up, and we feel that a large green lung in the heart of the district will be highly valuable for the district, as well as for us. So eventually, we created a 150,000 square feet urban park and only placed a food and beverage pavilion and large glass canopy to enliven the park and create a comfortable outdoor environment that is protected from the elements.



Previous and above | Tanjong Pagar Centre's 150,000 square feet Urban Park will be completed in phases by July 2017. Within the Urban Park is the city room, a public plaza with direct access to Tanjong Pagar MRT station that can accommodate 2,000 people. Photo Credit: GuocoLand Singapore



Tell us more about how your spaces connect to the surrounding neighbourhood.

Chee Wah: The Park at ground level directly links Frasers Tower to Telok Ayer Park, connecting Frasers Tower to the green network extending through Tanjong Pagar Park and Duxton Plain Park to Pearl's Hill Park. We designed Frasers Tower to enhance networking opportunities by integrating several community areas into the environment. We welcome the new URA guidelines for public spaces because we see the value of creating charming environments where communities can be inspired at work and socialise without any spatial restrictions.

What other kinds of public spaces would you like to see in future?

Hsing Yao: I would certainly like to see more public spaces in the city, and the recent policies and incentives introduced by URA will help with that. Besides large urban spaces, I think there are a lot of potential in small, even hidden away

public spaces. Not all public spaces need to be vibrant and busy, the city can also do with some beautiful quiet places, maybe even 'secret gardens'. These spaces add a layer of richness and serendipity to the city. Barcelona city, for example, has since the 1990s made a concerted effort to convert little remnant lands, traffic islands into very beautiful and well appreciated urban spaces.



What makes a good public space?

From URA's Good Practice Guide, a good public space should be:

1. a pedestrian priority zone
2. of a meaningful size
3. easily accessible
4. highly visible
5. well shaded and comfortable
6. well lit and safe
7. well landscaped
8. offering good seating options for everyone
9. enjoyable and delightful serving various public needs

This article was first published in Skyline, a URA magazine that covers urban issues shaping Singapore. <https://www.ura.gov.sg/uol/publications/corporate/skyline>

Above | The 38-storey Frasers Tower will be completed in the second quarter of 2018. The public can expect two major public spaces – The Park, a 17,000 square feet park space on the ground floor and The Oasis, a three-storey integration of retail and garden podium space directly connected to Frasers Tower. Photo Credit: Frasers Centrepoint Singapore